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DOCUMENT-IDENTIFIER: US 20030114967 A1
TITLE: Vehicle service status tracking system and method

Abstract Paragraph:
A system and methods to allow multiple stations in geographically dispersed locations to monitor and track vehicle repair record and service status information in a coordinated fashion. In a service area comprised of a number of geographically-bounded service regions, at least one regional communications terminal is provided in communication with a plurality of local communications terminals. Each local communications terminal and regional communications terminal communicates with a vehicle service status database. Vehicle service events are entered into a vehicle tracking system and maintained using the vehicle status database. Database files are exchanged between local communications-terminals and regional communications terminals and with a central equipment manager in order to provide timely and accurate dissemination of service status. Vehicle service status, including an equipment availability prediction, is shared with marketing offices and retail locations to enable personnel at such locations to make informed decisions in allocating particular equipment to a customer based on the customer's needs.

Summary of Invention Paragraph:
[0003] The present invention provides a system and methods to allow multiple stations in geographically dispersed locations to monitor and track vehicle repair record and service status information. In a service area comprised of a number of geographically-bounded service regions, at least one regional communications terminal is provided in communication with a plurality of local communications terminals. Each local communications terminal is typically located at a separate repair or service location having responsibility for servicing the vehicles temporally located within the region.

Detail Description Paragraph:
[0031] The present invention provides a system and methods to allow multiple stations in geographically dispersed locations to monitor and track vehicle repair record and service status information regardless of vehicle location.

CLAIMS:

1. A method of tracking and disseminating vehicle repair record and service status information at a plurality of geographically remote service locations, comprising the steps of: maintaining vehicle repair record and service status information for a plurality of vehicles at a local communications terminal using a vehicle status database, said vehicle status database operably coupled to at least one of said local communications terminals; creating a service event notification pertaining to one of said vehicles using said local communications terminals; collecting a plurality of said service event notifications into a vehicle service status file; uploading said vehicle service status file from said local communications terminals to a regional communications terminal using an electronic network; generating an availability prediction for each said vehicle contained in said vehicle status database based on the vehicle service status information contained in said vehicle status database; collecting a plurality of said vehicle service status files into a

vehicle service status report at each of said regional communications terminals; transmitting said vehicle service status report from each of said regional communications terminals to a central equipment manager; and transmitting said vehicle service status report from said central equipment manager to each of said local communications terminals and regional communications terminals, such that each local service location having said local communications terminal is provided with current vehicle repair record and service status information regardless of the geographic region in which the vehicle is located.

2. A method of tracking and disseminating vehicle repair record and service status information at a plurality of geographically remote service locations, comprising the steps of: maintaining vehicle repair record and service status information for a plurality of vehicles at a local communications terminal using a vehicle status database, said vehicle status database operably coupled to each said local communications terminal; providing a regional communications terminal in electronic communication with a plurality, of geographically remote local communications terminals; providing a plurality of said regional communications terminals in electronic communication with a central equipment manager; creating a service event notification pertaining to one of said vehicles using one of said local communications terminals; generating an availability prediction for each said vehicle contained in said vehicle status database based on the vehicle service status information contained in said vehicle status database using said local communications terminal; transmitting said availability prediction to a marketing communications terminal, said marketing communications terminal provided in electronic communication with said local communications terminal; storing said service event notification at said local communications terminal using said vehicle status database; collecting a plurality of said service event notifications into a vehicle service status file; uploading said vehicle service status file from said local communications terminals to said regional communications terminal using an electronic network; storing said vehicle service status file at said regional communications terminal using said vehicle status database; collecting a plurality of said vehicle service status files into a vehicle service status report at each of said regional communications terminals; and transmitting said vehicle service status report from each of said regional communications terminals to said central equipment manager.

9. A system for tracking and disseminating vehicle repair record and service status information at a plurality of geographically remote service locations comprising: a plurality of non-collocated local communications terminals; a plurality of non-collocated regional communications terminals, each one of said regional communications terminals provided in electronic communication with a subset of said local communication terminals within a particularly bounded geographic region; each one of said local communications terminals and said regional communications terminals provided in electronic communication with at least one marketing communications terminal; a vehicle status database operably coupled to each one of said local communications terminals and said regional communications terminals, said vehicle status database containing vehicle repair record and service status information for a plurality of vehicles; said local communications terminals and said regional communications terminals capable of exchanging information with a central equipment manager using an electronic network; said local communications terminal including means for generating an availability prediction for each said vehicle contained in said vehicle status database based on the vehicle service status information contained in said vehicle status database; said local communications terminal including means for transmitting said availability prediction to said marketing communications terminal; said local communications terminals including transmission means for uploading a vehicle service status file from one of said local communications terminals to said regional communications terminal using an electronic network; and said regional communications terminals including means for collecting a plurality of vehicle service status files received from said local communications terminals and transmitting said plurality of vehicle

service status files to said central equipment manager.

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